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GERMANY

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American Citizen News

QUARTER 2, 2008

Happy Independence Day!

Independence Day is a special time for Americans as we remember the founding of our nation and recommit ourselves to the ideals upon which it was based. We realize how far we have come, from 13 tiny colonies to the world's most powerful nation, and how far we have yet to go to realize the goals set at the nation's founding. Many sizable American communities will be holding celebrations, but even if you are the only American for miles, it is a great opportunity to invite your friends to dinner and share some of the history of our nation with them. Whether you choose to celebrate at the Berlin Street Party or quietly at home, Happy Birthday, America!

U.S. Embassy Returns to Pariser Platz

The Embassy of the United States of America in Germany is returning to its original, pre-war site on Berlin's Pariser Platz, right next to the Brandenburg Gate. It fills the last gap in the Pariser Platz panorama, and is seen by some as healing the scar left on the landscape by the Berlin Wall. U.S. Ambassador to Germany William Timken emphasized the historical significance of the site where the old American Embassy had been "demolished to make way for a Wall that divided a city, a country and a continent," and characterized the new Embassy as a symbol of the German-American partnership.

Chancellor Angela Merkel and former President George H. W. Bush will speak at the grand opening and Independence Day reception on the 4th of July. While the reception is invitation-only, everyone can enjoy the traditional fireworks display that will close the program.



The public celebration will take place on July 5th in Berlin (see next page). **Please note:** consular services will remain at their current location on Clayallee 170.

Less than 5 months away...

Are you registered to vote?

As the excitement of the primaries dies down, the REAL campaign begins. Don't get so busy researching candidates that you forget to register! Find out how to get a an absentee ballot for your state or district at www.fvap.gov.

Already coming to the embassy or consulate? Just ask for the voting information for your state or district while you're there!

July 5th Street Party in Berlin!



Independence Day and the opening of the new embassy will be celebrated in smashing style on July 5th with an enormous public open-air festival and stage program at the Brandenburg Gate between noon and 10:00 PM. German and American snacks, drinks, and culinary specialties will line the streets, and programs and special offers from Institutions and associations from both sides of the Atlantic will be available. The center of the festivities will be the main stage at Pariser Platz, with smaller stages all along the festival streets from Yitzak-Rabin-Strasse to the corner of Unter Den Linden and Wilhelmstrasse.

“Amerikafest” will be cultural as well as culinary feast. Musical performances by soul and funk music star and long-term Berlin resident **Jocelyn B. Smith**, soul and pop singer **Oscar Loya**, the German-American band **Latest Edition**, barbershop quartet **Smokestack Lightnin'**, **Check Six US Air Force Jazzband**, as well as award-winning German/U.S.-themed entertainment production, **Stars in Concert**, will perform live at the Brandenburg Gate. The **Flying Steps** will showcase their urban dance stylings, and even “Tweety” and “Sylvester,” popular cartoon characters will appear with the **Warner Looney Tunes Sportparty**. Other performers include **Kareem Salama**, renowned Country Western singer, and a performance by the **Alvin Ailey II American Dance Theater**. The plethora of talent is heart-stopping, foot-stomping evidence of the deep German-American connection.

Hope to see you there!

Passport Cards are Coming

The first “passport card,” a wallet-sized card only valid for land and sea travel between the United States and Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Bermuda, will be going into production in July! The card will provide a less expensive, smaller, and more convenient alternative to the passport book for those who travel frequently to these destinations by land or by sea. Applications will be accepted at Consulates and embassies for overseas residents later this summer. Stay tuned for more information in the next newsletter, or find out more at http://travel.state.gov/passport/ppt_card/ppt_card_3926.html.

Money in your Pocket: All About the Economic Stimulus Payment

Many of you will have already received a surprise check or direct deposit from the IRS, and some of you may still be waiting. What is the “Economic Stimulus Payment,” and how is it calculated?

Starting in late April, the Treasury began sending economic stimulus payments to more than 130 million households. To receive a payment, taxpayers must have a valid Social Security number, \$3,000 of income and file a 2007 federal tax return. IRS will take care of the rest. Eligible people will receive up to \$600 (\$1,200 for married couples), and parents will receive an additional \$300 for each eligible child younger than 17. Millions of retirees, disabled veterans and low-wage workers who usually are exempt from filing a tax return must do so this year in order to receive a stimulus payment.

Even though April 15 has passed, there is still time for retirees, disabled veterans and others who normally do not file a tax return to submit a 2007 form to receive an economic stimulus payment. Free File is the fast, easy and free way to file your federal income tax return. If your adjusted gross income was \$54,000 or less in 2007, you can use [Free File](#) to prepare and e-file your taxes online. If you normally don't file a tax return but need to file one for 2007 solely to receive your economic stimulus payment, you may now select from the list of companies on the Free File - Economic Stimulus Payment page (<http://www.irs.gov/efile/lists/0..id=179739.00.html>).

Want to estimate the amount of your payment? Have a copy of your 2007 tax return handy and access the Economic Stimulus Calculator at <http://www.irs.gov/app/espc/>.

Especially for Social Security Recipients: <http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0..id=179201.00.html>

Especially for Veterans Affairs Recipients: <http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0..id=179203.00.html>

Especially for Military Combat Personnel: <http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0..id=180339.00.html>

For more detailed information, see the IRS website at <http://www.irs.gov/>

For Frequently Asked Questions, see <http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0..id=179181.00.html>

For legal guidance, see <http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0..id=179388.00.html>



WARNING! Scam Artists are Targeting Stimulus Payments!

If someone claiming to be from the IRS calls or e-mails you about the payments and asks you for a Social Security, bank account or credit card number, it's a scam. The scammers are trying to get your personal and financial information so they can empty your bank account, run up charges on your credit card and more.

To find out more, go to <http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0..id=178061.00.html>, IRS Warns of New E-Mail and Telephone Scams Using the IRS Name; Advance Payment Scams Starting.

Put Your Application into Overdrive

With summer travel season getting under way, there is no better time than now to check your passports. Do you have enough pages for visas? Is the passport still valid? Do you even know where it is?

The following are some tips to help speed the passport renewal, replacement, and endorsement process. Remember, all overseas applications are already expedited, so make sure you plan ahead and allow enough time for the services you need. Keep in mind that there are hundreds of fellow Americans also applying for services!

New online passport e-application Wizard!

You can now fill out passport application forms online using the Application Wizard, print them out, and mail in or bring the completed e-forms to your appointment. The data you entered is stored in a barcode found in the upper left-hand corner of the application (look for it when you print). It can be scanned into the computer at your appointment, reducing both processing time and the potential for data entry errors. That means less time at the embassy and consulate for in-person applications, and a faster turn-around for mail-in applications!

Bring the right photos

The photos you submit are digitized and printed in your passport, so they must meet certain quality and size standards. U.S. passport photos are different from German passport photos and many photographers in Germany are not familiar with U.S. passport photo specifications. Whether you make the photos yourself or go to a photographer, we recommend you print out and read (or give to the photographer) the photo requirements:

http://germany.usembassy.gov/germany/img/assets/9057/photo_requirements_passports.pdf

In-person applicants may also use the photo booth in the Consulate waiting room (€6.00, coins only).

Have the right supporting documents

What you need depends on how and for what you are applying. Be sure to visit <http://germany.usembassy.gov/> before you make an appointment so you can be sure you have everything you need. If you are applying by mail, remember:

- NEVER send cash through the post, registered or otherwise!
- If you are submitting original passports or paperwork, ALWAYS keep a copy for your own records!

Bring the right people to the appointment

Remember that for new passport applications, the applicant must appear in person. Minor applicants **under the age of 16** must also appear, and both parents must give consent in person, in a notarized statement, through a special power of attorney; single parents or guardians must present proof of sole custody.

For more information, go to http://germany.usembassy.gov/germany/services/passport_issuance.html.

You can link to the Passport Application Wizard for all passport forms at <https://pptform.state.gov/>

Remember to check at travel.state.gov for security and visa information for your overseas travel destination.

